CALFED PROPOSAL 4/14/99

4.5 PSP Cover Sheet

Proposal Title: WILDCAT CANYON WESTERN SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT

Applicant Name: City of El Cerrito

Mailing Address: I0890 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, California 94530

Telephone: (510) 215-4300 (City Manager, Gary Pokorny)

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Email: gpokorny@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us

APR 1 5 1999

Amount of funding requested: \$1,046,000 for 3 years

Indicate the Topic for which you are applying (check only one box).

Fish Passage/Fish Screens Habitat Restoration

Introduced Species Fish Management/Hatchery Environmental Education

x Local Watershed Stewardship

Water Quality

(No specified actions are listed under Local Watershed Stewardship)

Does the proposal address a specified Focused Action? ______yes__x_no

What county or counties is the project located in? CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Indicate the geographic area of your proposal (check only one box);

Sacramento River Mainstern

Sacramento Trib:

San Joaquin River Mainstern

San Joaquin Trib:

Delta:

East Side Trib;

Suisun Marsh and Bay

North Bay/South Bay:

Landscape (entire Bay-Delta watershed)

Indicate the primary species which the proposal addresses (check all that apply):

San Joaquin and East-side Delta tributaries fall-run chinook salmon

Winter-run chinook salmon

Spring-run chinook salmon Late-fall run chinook salmon

Fall-run chinook salmon Delta smelt

Longfin smelt Splittail

Steelhead trout

Striped bass x Migratory birds

All chinook species

Other: PERENNIAL GRASSLAND FLORA AND FAUNA

All anadromous salmonids

Green sturgeon

Specify the ERP strategic objective and target (s) that the project addresses. Include page numbers from January 1999 version of ERP Volume I and II:

CALFED's "Vision for Perennial Grassland," (pp 168-171, ERP Vol. 1) "The general target for perennial grassland is to protect and restore 4,000-6,000 acres in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Ecological Management Zone and I,000 acres in the Suisun Marsh/North San Francisco Bav Ecological Zone" p. 170. Steelhead trout (p. 171, Vol. I), Contaminants (p. 503, Vol. I), Non-native Species (p. 475, vol. I), Migratory Birds (364, Vol. I).

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Indicate the type of applicant (check only one box):

State agency Federal agency Public/Non-profit joint venture Non-profit

x Local government/district
Private party
University

Other:

Indicate the type of project (check only one box):

Planning
x Implementation
Monitoring
Education
Research

By signing below, the applicant declares the following:

- 1.) The truthfulness of all representations in their proposal;
- 2.) The individual signing the form is entitled to submit the application on behalf of the applicant (if the applicant is an entity or organization); and

3.) The person submitting the application has read and understood the conflict of interest and confidentiality discussion in the PSP (Section 2.4) and waives any and all rights to privacy and confidentiality of the proposal on behalf of the applicant, to the extent as provided in the Section

Mr. Gary F. Pokorny, City Manager, City of El Cerrito

Printed name of applicant

Signature of applicant



THE WILDCAT CANYON WESTERN SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT

Applicant.

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Project Manager

Shelterbelt Builders, Inc, 3088 Claremont Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94705

Telephone: (510) 841-0911, fax (510) 601-6896

Project Managers: William J. McClung and Mark Heath Email: heathman@saber.net

Participants and Collaborators

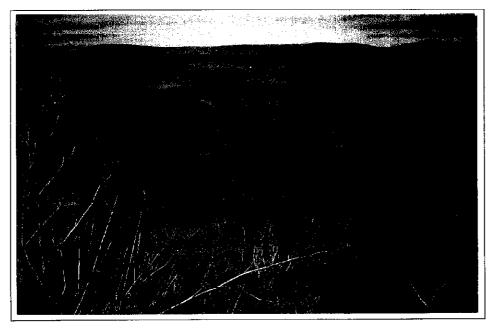
East Bay Regional Park District (Endorsed in concept by EBRPD Board of Directors, 4/6/99) Kensington Fire Protection District (Endorsed in concept by Board of Directors, 4/7/99)

Type of Organization, Tax Status, and Tax ID:

CITY OF EL CERRITO 94-6000325

SHELTERBELT BUILDERS INC, An open-land management company dedicated to wildfire safety, restoration of native vegetation, and beautiful natural landscapes

California License #620615 C27 LANDSCAPING Tax ID# 94-3129735



Wildiat Canyon looking across brush-dominated western slope toward mosaic of grassland, brush, and tree cover maintained on eastern slope by cattle grazing regime, 1998

II. Executive Summary

THE WILDCAT CANYON WESTERN SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT

Applicant: The City of El Cerrito

a. Project description and justification

This is a request for \$1,046,000 million in CALFED funding for a 375-acre, three-year LOCAL WATERSI IED STEWARDSHIP PROJECT along the upper western slope of Wildcat Canyon where urban development in Kensington, El Cerrito, East Richmond Heights, and Richmond interconnects with wildland extending down 1,000 to 1,500 feet to Wildcat Creek, which supports steelhead trout, expands into an intact marshland in Richmond, and then feeds into San Pablo Bay north of the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge.

Wildcat Canyon is the largest undeveloped watershed in the Berkeley Hills and it is highly valued by residents and environmentalists. Several major studies and projects – including the 312-acre Wildcat Creek Grazing Management Demonstration Project (1992-95ff), the many-decade flood-control efforts where North Richmond receives Wildcat and San Pablo creeks, and the projects of The Friends of Wildcat Creek – have concentrated on the eastern slope of Wildcat Canyon and Wildcat Creek itself, but the western ridge and slope have been subjected to more episodic and contested management regimes. The western slope is now predominantly brush and scrub, with heavy invasion by exotic species.

The fear of fires, slides, and environmental degradation have plagued the management of the western slope; adequate funding has been lacking for implementation of carefully studied and approved plans, including the 1985 East Bay Regional Park District (EBPRD), Wildcat Canyon Regional Park Final Land Use-Development Plan (LUDP) & Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The dynamic of these Three Fears goes like this: (I) fearing wildfire, hundreds of homeowners on the ridge, encouraged by state and local fire codes, aggressively "clear" and "remove" vegetation below their homes for 30 to 100 feet, which exposes soil to water and sun impacts, both direct rainfall/evaporation and concentrated runoff from houses, and weed invasions; (2) fearing more of such obvious degradations of the land, environmentalists, including the Sierra Club and even some wildfire-threatened residents, oppose fuel-management projects in general, and (3) fearing environmental opposition and litigation when slides do happen in the area, the East Bay Regional Park District, the principal landowner below the homes, does very limited vegetation management in the areas below the houses, even when approved LUDPs and extant EIRs support such work.

The negative impacts of this dynamic include (1) increased erosion and slide dangers, (2) unbuffered urban runoff into the watershed, (3) extensive exotic weed invasions spreading down into the canyon, and (4) inadequate wildfire protection.

b. Primary biological /ecological objectives

We aim to manage the vegetation in the upper Wildcat Watershed so these four negative impacts are minimized, or reversed, by converting large areas of weed and old brush vegetation to perennial grasslands managed to buffer and absorb water runoff and to enhance habitats.

The hypothesis of this project is that a large-scale, community-based LOCAL WATERSHED STEWARDSI IIP project, involving hundreds of local volunteer and part-time paid workers, can substantially convert a weed and brush dominated upper watershed — now wildfire-and-erosion prone — to a rich mosaic of native plant communities and habitats, especially increased perennial grassland cover

adjacent to riparian areas, while also achieving a major reduction of wildfire fuels in an urban/wildland interface. If successful, the most important biological/ecological result of this project may well be the absence, over the long term, of high-intensity wildfires in the area, which are immensely destructive to local environments and leave watersheds denuded. There are at least the following four other objectives we hope to achieve:

(I) Throughout the 375 acres, INTRODUCED SPECIES (plant) will be discouraged, to the maximum degree possible, by workers trained to recognize the principal "Exotic Pest Plants of Greatest Ecological Concern in California" (CalEPPC, 1996) and the "Top 20 Pest Plants of the East Bay" (Ertter, 1998), and to recognize valued native plants. Local California Native Plant Society and other plant experts will be pervasively present in this project to achieve a high degree of discrimination in the way vegetation is manipulated. (2) WATER QUALITY values will be served by the objective of encouraging and maintaining a low, perennial grassland and riparian vegetation cover on the upper half of the slope to more effectively filter urban runoff from the top of the ridge. (3) HIGHLY VALUED HABITATS, such as healthy riparian areas near Wildcat Creek, the EBRPD's carefully managed Nature Study Area, woodrat nests, likely homes of rare migratory and ground-nesting songbirds, tiger salamanders, redlegged frogs, and Alameda whipsnakes will be identified and largely left alone. New habitats – low piles of cut vegetation we call Stebbins Piles - will be created by workers as an environmentally beneficial way to dispose of fire-hazardous or invasive-exotic vegetation. (4) HUMAN VALUES will be respected and enhanced by this project. This is a beautiful, much-used, and loved part of the Berkeley Hills. This project is about humans taking care of their local land by working on it, mainly with their own hands and with low-impact tools. Aesthetic, access, community involvement, and ENVIORNMENTAL EDUCATION goals will be important criteria for judging the success of this project.

d. Adverse and third-party impacts. The Lead Agency will conduct an Initial Study to determine effects of the project on the environment. It is not expected to have negative third-party impacts.

e. Applicant Qualifications. The City of El Cerrito is the central political entity related to this area, with fire-safety responsibility for all of El Cerrito and Kensington. The East Bay Regional Park District, the largest and most experienced landowner in relation to this area, is the indispensable partner in the project and its land management policies and studies in this area will be the framework within which most of the project is conducted. Shelterbelt Builders Inc is a local land management firm dedicated to developing, implementing, and monitoring projects of this kind.

f. Local support/coordination with other programs and compatibility with CALFED objectives

Widespread local support and compatibility with other projects and approved policies of landowners in Wildcat Canyon is a premise of this project. A draft of this proposal has been reviewed by a number of stakeholders whose criticisms and support have been solicited. CALFED objectives, as presented in the February 1999 Proposal Solicitation Package, are engaged in this project: It is within CALFED Ecological Zone 4, Greater San Francisco Bay, Upper Watershed Regions (Figures I and 7, Maps). It supports three of six CALFED 1999 Funding Priorities: I. "…recovery of at-risk native species in San Francisco Bay and the watershed above the estuary." 4. "Protect or restore functional habitat types throughout the watershed for public values such as recreation, scientific research and aesthetics," and 5. "Prevent establishment of additional non-native species and reduce the negative biological and economic impacts of established non-native species." (p. 12 PSP) It addresses multiple ecosystem goals. (p. 13 PSP) Finally, we note that "CALFED would like to encourage and support watershed stewardship throughout the ERP area." (Eligible proposals, p. 22)

III. Project Summary

The WILDCAT CANYON WESTERN SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT seeks to demonstrate in practice that wildfire safety near cities can be accomplished on a large scale while also serving important social and biological values, including enhancement of native plant communities and their associated fauna, environmental education, reduced slide potential, reduced surface erosion, and healthy human access to a beautiful watershed in the East Bay Hills. In short, that there are major ways in which wildfire safety, weed control, and restoration can be the same enterprise.

This project conforms especially to CALFED "Vision for Perennial Grassland," (pp 168-171, Vol. 1, Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan, 2/99), which indicates "The general target for perennial grassland is to protect ... I,000 acres in the Suisun Marsh/North San Francisco Bay Ecological Zone."

Subject to agreement with the landowners, approximately 375 acres of undeveloped land along the 6-mile Kensington, El Cerrito, Richmond Heights, and Richmond borders with Wildcat Canyon will be placed under an adaptive vegetation management regime with these major objectives:

- (I) Remnant plant communities of perennial grassland throughout the Project Area will be identified and mapped. This area at the urban/wildland interface is a complex mixture of land that has been affected by development and human decisions: ranching for over a century and in the last few decades primarily by lack of positive disturbance. Fortunately, there is a rich understory of perennial grassland and riparian species in much of the undeveloped Project Area. The principal stressors of perennial grassland in the Project Area are INTRODUCED SPECIES and BRUSH DOMINATION.
- (2) Invasive and non-native plant species especially French and Spanish broom, yellow starthistle, artichoke thistle, poison hemlock, blackwood acacia, Tasmanian blue gum eucalyptus, Pampas grass, Cape ivy, Himalayaberry, fennel, cotoneaster, euphorbia, golden spurge, and annual grasses will be sharply out back or hand pulled, and discouraged from reseeding and spreading.
- (3) Enormous continuous stands of decadent native poison oak and coyote brush will be modified to achieve separation and reduction of wildfire fuels and to open up close to 50 percent of the land to perennial grassland plant communities, which come to life on much of this site when brush is thinned. Poison oak and coyote brush are important plants for birds, butterflies, and for other plants in Wildcat Canyon. The goal is not elimination of these native species, but rather that they be separated into many islands of older brush and be kept youthful and low in the perennial grassland areas.
- (4) The rich native plant communities already present on Wildcat Ridge will be encouraged to hold on and to expand through natural reseeding. Seed collection, propagation, and planting in disturbed areas or where native vegetation is lacking are also a part of the project.
- (5) Important trees and clusters of vegetation will be preserved. Overall, not more than 50 percent of the 375 acres will receive treatment, even though every acre will be evaluated for treatment. Sitespecific judgments by trained workers and volunteers will determine what is cut and what is saved.
- (6) Riparian vegetation, which exists along many of the lateral gullies and indentations, and near Wildcat Creek, will be protected and encouraged, especially by removing invasive exotics.

Project Approach

The WILDCAT CANYON WESTERN SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT is planned to be land management by trained humans using three relatively low-impact tools to tip the balance from a

brush/weed dominated landscape toward a mosaic of approximately 50 percent perennial grassland: (I) seasonal hand pulling of weeds (brooms in the winter, hemlock in the spring, yellow starthistle in the summer) to arrest and set back infestations and seed production, (2) seasonal (winter and spring woody brush; spring and summer annual grasses and weeds) <u>cutting with hand tools</u> such as chain saws and weedcutters so as to selectively favor perennial grass and plant seeding and (3) <u>low-intensity fires</u> managed by the El Cerrito and EBRPD fire departments. The El Cerrito Fire Department has been experimenting with managed burns to favor grasslands in recent years on the 90-acre Hillside Natural Area within El Cerrito, and is eager, as a part of its in-kind contribution to this project, to expand its burning program with willing partners in the area.

This is a people-intensive approach to watershed stewardship. Site-specific learning, training of young and old people to care for the land, and team-oriented stewardship will characterize the whole project. Substantial in-kind contributions are anticipated from local volunteers, Boy Scouts at Camp Herms, Court Offenders, and programs to help youth-at-risk will be among the sources of low-cost labor. But it is also a guiding principle of this project that this is hard, skilled work that deserves fair pay for those who do it well: at least 80 percent of this work is expected to be accomplished by paid workers, usually on a part-time and temporary basis.

Heavy equipment, use of chemicals, grazing, or work by people without knowledge of the biological values of the area are <u>not</u> part of this plan and would not be used without careful consideration and approvals based upon specific, exceptional circumstances.

Division of the Project Area into about 10 natural Stewardship Zones of approximately 37 acres each is anticipated, with each Zone having a Steward and an Assistant Steward, and small teams of paid workers and local volunteers. Neighborhood associations and Kensington and El Cerrito Neighborhood Emergency Assistance Teams will be encouraged to take an interest in the project. Knowledge of each area's biota, unique configurations, and water cycles will be required of the Zone Stewards, and passed on to other workers and volunteers. Zone Stewards will also be expected to get to know the neighbors, promote the project locally, and solve or anticipate problems in their area.

As this is demanding physical work, and involves exposure to poison oak and other risks, screening of and safety precautions for workers and volunteers will be essential.

It is a goal of this project to include a large number of people – eventually perhaps as many as 500 - to contribute in various ways to the stewardship of Wildcat Canyon ridge. Approximately 20 percent of the land within the Project Area is now under some active vegetation management regime. As many as 100 people may already be doing some work in the area, and it is our goal to respect such previous work, not interfere with it, but expand and embrace it. We want to learn from what others are doing and share our knowledge as well. Within the three years of the project, 100 percent of the Project Area is expected to receive stewardship attention and action, which will include leaving substantial areas observed, but not treated.

Project Management

SHELTERBELT BUILDERS has conceptualized this project and will be its project manager, subject to ongoing approval by the City of El Certito and the principal stakeholders. SHBLTERBELT BUILDERS has worked on projects of this kind for the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (a 50-acre broom-removal project), the Vicente Canyon Hillside Foundation property (a fully realized 500 foot Buffer Zone with oak-savanna-perennial-grassland mosaics as the primary

objective), the University of California (Panoramic Hill Project), and the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (urban forest management; revegetation of a major slide area), and the City of San Francisco (restoration of natural areas within Hunter's Point/Bay View districts).

Other contractors and entities will be expected to work within the Project Area, as they already are, but Shelterbelt will oversee the entire project, coordinate with existing vegetation management programs, and be the local manager wherever necessary. It is assumed both that Shelterbelt will do a large proportion of the field work and that contracts will be let for others to work as well.

Scientific and Social Monitoring & Studies

Three scientific monitoring committees – for plants, for animals, for water – and two for social values – wildfire safety and beauty – are envisioned. These small (initially three member) committees will evaluate the progress of the project on a regular basis with written reports to the City of El Cerrito and other stakeholders.

Throughout this project, efforts will be made to engage the interest of scientists and students of all ages who may want to study any aspect of the project. Funds to support some of the most promising scientific projects are included in the budget and will be administered by the five committees.

CEQA, NEPA, and Other Environmental Compliance

The City of El Cerrito will serve as Lead Agency for the purposes of compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public jurisdictions expected to have roles as Responsible Agencies include the East Bay Regional Park District, Contra Costa County, the City of Richmond, East Bay Municipal Utility District, and the Kensington Fire Board.

Prior to initiation of the project, The City of El Cerrito will conduct an Initial Study to determine if the project may have a significant effect on the environment, and, if appropriate, will prepare an environmental assessment pursuant to NEPA. Based on the results of the Initial Study, the City will complete the appropriate environmental documentation. The City as Lead Agency, and the Responsible Agencies, will then duly consider the documentation in the process of making decisions necessary to carrying out the project.

It may be determined that the activities proposed are within the scope of the EIR prepared in 1985 by the EBRPD for the Wildcat Canyon Regional Park LUDP and its subsequent amendments.

At this time, pending completion of the Initial Study, it appears that the project will have no adverse effects which cannot be mitigated by measures which can be incorporated into the plans for the project. Any effects on such environmental factors as aesthetics, biological resources, air quality and noise are expected to be minor and temporary in nature.

Location and Geographic Boundaries of the Project

The project is in Contra Costa County along the western slope of Wildcat Canyon just east of Richmond, East Richmond Heights, El Cerrito and Kensington. The land to be managed is upland from Wildcat Canyon Creek, as much as 1500 feet in some areas, and touching the creek in others. There are hundreds of landowners within the Project Area, but the largest by far is the East Bay Regional Park District.

IV. Ecological/Biological Benefits

Wildcat Creek is one of a few relatively undeveloped upper watersheds in the East Bay Hills. The creek has a near continuous corridor of riparian vegetation and supports resident rainbow trout and has the potential to support winter run steelhead trout with continued creek access improvements (Alexander 1999). Wildcat Creek has a long history of restoration. Initiated in the 60's, the Army Corps of Engineers, Contra Costa County, and a number community groups worked for over thirty years to incorporate a restoration based flood control project for the lower reaches of the creek. In the upper watershed, the progressive Wildcat Creek Demonstration Grazing Project was conceived by the East Bay Regional Park District, Contra Costa County Resource Conservation District, and UC Berkeley as an attempt to maintain perennial grasslands on the eastern slopes of the canyon to improve native habitats and reduce fine sediment inputs to the upper watershed. The western slope, on the other hand, has been largely untreated since the area remains a complex mix of homes, weedy fuel buildup, active lands lides, and valuable native habitats.

The proposed project will attempt to address these complex issues through a restoration framework. The 375-acre WILDCAT CANYON WESTERN SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT—will enhance riparian and perennial grassland habitats and water quality while also addressing fuel buildup and erosion problems along the most developed section of the upper watershed. The expansion of remnant perennial grassland areas along the city boundaries of El Cerrito, Kensington, East Richmond Heights, and Richmond will help buffer Wildcat Creek from pollutants and sediment generated from urban runoff. Additionally, restored perennial grasslands, rejuvenated senescent scrub, and weed control will substantially reduce the threat of wildland fire to neighboring communicies. Much of the project area is in a state of healthy, mature oak-bay woodland and riparian vegetation that will only be savored, cleansed of weeds, and otherwise left alone. Additional riparian areas will be enhanced or installed to buffer the outflow of 22 storm water culverts to reduce gully formation and landslide aggravation.

Urban Runoff and Sediment

There are approximately 1000 homes along the western ridge of Wildcat canyon. The most likely sources of runoff pollutants are from these homes in El Cerrito, Kensington, East Richmond Heights, and Richmond. Heavy metals from roofs and gutters, garden herbicide/pesticide from residential applications, and petroleum based contaminants from roadways and composite roofs threaten the water quality of Wildcat Creek. Much of the project reach of Wildcat Creek is only protected by a small buffer of riparian vegetation. The western slope of Wildcat Canyon is very steep and most development in the watershed is very close (50' to 1500') from the stream channel. The enhancement of grassland areas along the ridge would help buffer the creek from a potentially significant source of urban runoff pollution (Daniel 1996).

Better management of urban runoff from the largest upper watershed sources would enhance water quality for resident steelhead (rainbow) trout, amphibians, and other aquatic wildlife in Wildcat Creek. Approximately 200 acres of urban land run off through 22 culverts to the eastern slope of Wildcat Creek between Alvarado and Tilden Parks. In addition to the proposed vegetation management, culverts dispersing runoff to the midslope will be evaluated and where appropriate, fixed in some way. Options include piping culverts down to the stream channel, installing brush check dams to reduce flow velocity and sediment delivery, and creating additional riparian catch basins to better filter and dissipate the runoff over the slope. Exact prescriptions will depend on site-to-site evaluations of the problems each culvert poses to the watershed. On-site waste materials from vegetation management practices will be incorporated into culvert outfall enhancements as

much as possible. Reduced pollutants and gully propelled sediment will directly improve in-stream water quality thus improving juvenile steelhead habitat, reduce water temperatures, and improve the aquatic habitat for all species within the stream, marsh, and Bay.

System-Wide Ecosystem and Non-Ecosystem Benefits

The implementation of the proposed project will solve multidimensional problems through a restoration framework. Restoring and managing perennial grassland, scrub, and associated riparian vegetation will significantly improve the area's potential to buffer nearby communities from a catastrophic wildfire event (VMC 1995). This labor intensive process will build on an existing stewardship base and also provide jobs for nearby communities. The alternatives to mitigate the fire hazard are enlarged barren fuel breaks, indiscriminate vegetation clearing, or heavy grazing, all of which significantly increase the potential for surface erosion and do little to reduce urban runoff contaminants.

The watershed restoration framework of this project will reduce the sediment and contaminant delivery ecosystem wide. Wildcat Marsh and San Pablo Bay lie at the mouth of Wildcat Creek. The natural geomorphology, urban runoff, cattle grazing, and past flood control projects have plagued the watershed with excessive sediments (Collins 1999). Reducing artificially produced sediments in the upper watershed will help preserve the natural function of the salt marsh and associated rare marsh species.

Perennial Grassland Restoration

Since fire suppression along the wildland-urban interface has interrupted the successional cycle of the scrub communities, perennial grasslands have largely disappeared from the ridge tops where they were likely present. In our project, artificial cycling of the scrub communities — by selective cutting or prescribed burning — will be used extensively to simulate natural disturbance events to restore perennial grasslands to the watershed. The careful, selective cutting of brush will reduce dead fuels and initiate a vigorous vegetative rebound so that mature roots are preserved and the plants long tap roots continue to anchor unstable topsoils to bedrock. This cutting regime will also foster a intermediate grassland rebound effect, preserving native plant diversity currently shackled in a static seed bank. The resultant grassland would be managed to reduce weed invasions and promote natural diversity.

Restoring high-quality native grassland habitat adjacent to the riparian corridor of Wildcat Creek will more naturally balance threatened grassland habitat with existing north coastal scrub on the west slope of the canyon and contribute to CALFED perennial grassland goals ("Vision for Perennial Grassland," (pp 168-171, Vol. I, Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan, 2/99), which indicates "The general target...I,000 acres in the Suisun Marsh/North San Francisco Bay Ecological Zone" p.170). In addition to buffering the stream from negative urban effects and protecting neighboring communities from wildfire, much needed habitat for native fish, mammals, birds, and plants will be created and enhanced. Many rare plants (Lake, CNPS 1999 and EBRPD, 1984) are found in the effected habitat types of Wildcat Canyon. Many of the plants such as White fritillary and Clarkia are dependent on grasslands which are currently being consumed by brushland encroachment and weed invasions. This mosaic of young plant communities is also complementary to the habitat needs of the Federally listed Alameda Striped Racer which could potentially occur in the area.

V. Technical Feasibility and Timing

The upper, western ridge of Wildcat Canyon contains a few surviving floristically rich remnant perennial grassland meadows. Native bunchgrasses such as blue wildrye (Elymus glaucus), California brome (Bromus carinatus), Torrey melic (Melica torreyana), and needlegrasses (Nasella lepida & pulchra) champion a quasi competitive grassland structure that harbors a diverse understory of native forbs and wildflowers. These meadows are threatened by the expansion of north coastal scrub that has spread unchecked by natural disturbance and invasions of pampas grass, euphorbia, French broom, yellow starthistle, and a diverse army of annual thistles and grasses. Historical records indicate that much of the project area had substantially more grassland than occurs today.

The proposed project is technically modest: low-technology tools will be used by humans to thin brush and reduce weeds in favor of native vegetation. The challenge is not technical, but judgmental. Knowledge of plant communities and weeds, and of the probable behaviors of fire and water runoff, are essential to this project. Throughout the project, we expect to be constantly evaluating the field work. We will pursue a continuous adaptive management approach with implementation governed by what is learned by working on the site and evaluations by interested stakeholders, especially the Five Committees that will be formally constituted to monitor progress.

Alternatives Evaluated

This area has not been burned, cut, or disturbed at a significant scale in the past 25 years. The surrogate treatment of selective cutting will rescue and regenerate the native seed bank, currently held hostage in the soils under senescent north coastal scrub and weed invasions. Because of its close proximity to three East Bay communities, allowing natural wildfire to perform its regenerative duty is not feasible. The only other reasonable alternatives for vegetation management at this scale are grazing or prescribed fire. Grazing is the least expensive and most common fuel-reduction measure throughout the Berkeley Hills. But the goats can produce barren moonscapes with no protection for valued plants, new and better distributions of weeds, and increased erosion.

Prescribed fire is an extremely important tool, which is essential for maintaining the diversity of some plant species. It is also, however, the most highly regulated and rarely used vegetation management tool near homes. Through cooperative efforts from the El Cerrito Fire Department, Contra Costa County Fire District and East Bay Regional Parks Fire Department, we plan to supplement hand restoration methods with appropriate fire intervals to ensure no further loss of native plant diversity and to maintain the management zone in the desired state. Pre- and post-fire management and planning are essential to avoid amplifying the instability of the landslide-prone slopes. Though the alternatives are much more common, selective cutting in a restoration framework is, we hope to demonstrate, a cost effective and readily implementable process to improve natural diversity, water quality, fire safety, beauty, and at the same time provide jobs in the community.

VI. Monitoring and Data Methodology

The main hypothesis of this project — that vegetation management on a large scale by selective cutting, weed pulling, and managed fire can be accomplished so as to increase biodiversity, reduce weed invasions and fire hazards, and improve water cycles — are susceptible to monitoring. Five Committees of three members each will be set up for this purpose. Plant Committee, Wildlife Committee, Fire Committee, Water Committee, and Aesthetics Committee Their job will be to monitor the impact of project implementation and recommend modifications to improve results. Each committee will work with the implementation contractor(s), have its own budget for special projects or honoraria, and be expected to write regular reports to the Lead Agency and stakeholders.

A spirit of adaptive management – learning from mistakes and successes – will inform the entire process, and results will be recorded and published. Fortunately, there is a history over several decades of studying these issues in or near Wildcat Canyon, including plant and animal lists (1975 and 1981), mapping of soil failures and landslides (1975, 1989, and a 1999 study by Earth Max Consultants, underway), fire hazards (1982 and a 1999 Farsite Gaming of Wildcat Canyon Area by Amphion Environmental, underway).

Each Committee, when formed, will establish its own criteria for monitoring, but it is expected that transect, quadrat, and/or nested frequency methods will be used to monitor succession, structure, and richness of grassland, scrub, woodland, and riparian plant communities. Plant communities can be mapped and converted to ArcView GIS format so they can be used by the EPRPD and other organizations with existing databases for wildfire modeling and natural resource management. Bird monitoring will be used to assess the impacts of weed removal and habitat improvements adjacent to riparian areas. The project site will also be monitored for rare reptiles and amphibians that are likely to occur in the area. Previously identified landslides in the Project Area will be monitored for movement and activity. Areas identified to be geologically active will be cautiously examined and left untreated or carefully modified. Much of the water quality data will be collected by volunteer stewardship groups already active in the area. New water quality monitoring tests will be incorporated into the existing framework of volunteer/school programs such as Kids in Creeks, CYCLE, Creek Keepers, and Friends of Wildcat Creek. These groups will continue to be trained and funded to collect appropriate water quality data.

Table I Monitoring and Data Collection Information

1) Biological/Ecological Objectives

Hypothesis/Question to be Evaluated

Monitoring Parameter(s) and Data Collection Approach Data Evaluation Approach Comments/ Data Priority

Is native plant diversity and complexity increasing?

Are animal habitats being protected, enhanced?

Is the risk of high-intensity wildfire reduced?

Has water runoff and erosion been reduced?

Is the Project Area more beautiful, interesting, and welcoming than before?

(As our evaluation committees have not been formed, it is premature to state exactly what the monitoring approaches will be, aithough we have suggested a few above. The budget for the project includes funds for monitoring and scientific studies. These will be done to a high standard and are expected to support several publications on the project.)

VII. Local Involvement

It is a guiding principle of this project that a large number of citizens, stakeholders, and organizations will participate in it, and that the project implementation will respect the work and values of others who have an interest in Wildcat Canyon. In addition to the City of El Cerrito, two principal stakeholders — the Board of the East Bay Regional Park District and the Kensington Fire Protection District — have participated in the discussion of this project, and have endorsed it in concept. In addition, approximately 50 other agencies or individuals with a strong interest in Wildcat Canyon have been informed of this project, including representatives of

Contra Costa County
The City of Richmond
West Contra Costa Unified School District
The Park District Association
El Cerrito Garden Club
The Sierra Club
The Audubon Society
Friends of the Estuary
San Francisco Estuary Institute
University of California
Kensington Community Services District

East Bay Chapter, California Native Plant Society
The Boy Scouts of America, Mt. Diablo Council
Contra Costa Consolidated Fire District
Pacific Gas & Electricity
East Bay Municipal Utility District
The Friends of Wildeat Creek
Waterways Restoration Institute
Urban Creeks Council
Merritt College
Friends of Parks
Contra Costa College

Local neighborhood and environmental groups will be continuously encouraged to understand and help with the project as it unfolds and is modified by a process of adaptive management. Reactions to drafts of this proposal have generally been positive, as suggested by the EBRPD Board's unanimous vote to support it in concept on April 6. The most frequent questions asked about it have been (a) What would the environmental impacts be? (b) Will work of the sort proposed increase the chance of landslides? and (c) how can it be financed after a three-year CALFED grant?

In answer to those questions: (a) the Lead Agency intends to go through a full CEQA process and we believe the kind of watershed stewardship proposed will be judged to have net positive rather than adverse impacts, (b) EBRPD have made extensive geotechnical maps of the Project Area (1985, 1999) and we intend to pay close attention to identified slide areas and attempt to correct some obvious water runoff problems, and (c) the mobilization of widespread public support for the project should provide a basis for improved long-term funding. It is also expected that when a several-decade accumulation of brush and weedy vegetation is converted, in substantial parts of the Project Area, to hundreds of grassland areas, comparatively modest annual maintenance — with managed burns or cutting — will be required to keep the watershed in this desired condition. Eventually it is hoped that as many as 500 people will participate as volunteers, or with financial support, to make local stewardship of this part of Wildcat Canyon a long-term community achievement.

Larger Impacts of the Wildcat Canyon Restoration Project

The complex challenges of urban/wildland interfaces throughout the Bay Area and the State of California are exemplified by this Project Area. It is hoped that this project will have significant demonstration value, showing how a community and the major stakeholders can join together in a large ecosystem restoration project that is motivated both by a desire for public safety from wildfires and a desire to restore a damaged environment near our homes. What we learn by working on this land can be transferred to other sites in the Bay Area and elsewhere.

VIII, Costs and Schedules

a. Budget costs

The City of El Cerrito requests the following from CALFED for these tasks:

I. For start-up stewardship, environmental reviews	75,000	
2. For demonstration project implementation	30,000	
3. Three large Project Area physical models	45,000	
4. Geological and hydrological studies, permits	30,000	
5. Animal and plant studies	30,000	
6. Scientific monitoring	30,000	
7. Publication, outreach	30,000	•
8. Three-year overall field implementation	675,000	
9. Legal agreements, mediation with landowners	15,000	
and an office of the Paper Artists painting	960,000	•
IO. Overhead	86,400	9 percent
Δ.	1016100	

\$1,046,400

We anticipate in-kind services, approximately equal to CALFED's contribution, will be provided for this project from: (1) the City of El Cerrito, especially for managed burns and field work from staff and City programs, (2) other local stakeholders, (3) EBRPD, PG&E, and EBMUD with their ongoing vegetation management programs in about 10 percent of the Project Area, and (4) a substantial level of volunteerism, which is a central goal of this project.

b. Schedule milestones

Assuming funding is available by October I, 1999:

Initial Study prepared; start-up stewardship; formation of five Committees; public outreach; mapping and definitions of work to be done.

Oct-Dec 1999

Demonstration Projects initiated on selected sites; work begins on three Project Area physical models; evaluation of initial work.

Jan-Mar 2000

Seasonal work for three years:

2000 - 2002

Winter quarter: major weed pulling, brush cutting and reduction for winter composting, evaluation and repair of water runoff problems.

Spring quarter: more weed pulling, plant monitoring, selective Spring mowing, more brush reduction, evaluation of native grass and forb development; managed burning as appropriate.

Summer quarter: identify, pull, or cut late-season weeds, like yellow starthistle; a second round of mowing, differentially scaled for fire safety and habitat preservation; seed collection; managed burning.

Fall quarter: propagation of seeds in nursery sites; review of year's progress & condition of the site; planting and seed sowing in barren areas with first rains.

Final reports, publications, recommendations for long-term sustainability.

Jan-Sept 2002

T 1	σ.	F2:	c .		3.61		- T
Task	Direct Labor Hours	Direct Salary & Benefits	Service Contracts	Material & Acquisition Costs	Miscellaneous and other Direct Costs	Overhead and indirect Costs 9%	Total Cost
I. Start-up stewardship,		•					
environmental reviews			75,000			6,750	81,7 <i>5</i> 0
Demonstration project							
unplementation			30,000			2,700	32,700
3. Three Project Area							
physical models			45,000			4,050	49,050
 Geological and hydrolog 	ical						
studies, permits			30,000			2,700	32,700
5. Animal and plant							
stadies			30,000			2,700	32,700
8. Scientific monitoring			30,000			2,700	3 2,7 00
7. Publication, outreach			30,000			2,700	32,700
8. Three-year field							
mplementation			675,000			60,750	735,750
9. Legal agreements,							
mediation with landowners			15.000			1.350	<u>16.350</u>
			960,000		1	86,400	1,046,400

The City of El Cerrito intends to subcontract all of the substantive tasks in this project, while maintaining oversight control through the contract-making process, reviewing of performance, and release of payments. The overhead costs indicated may be divided among the Lead Agency, Responsible Agencies, and the Project Manager, depending on the division of responsibility on each task.

Table 3. Cost Estimate Per Year	Phase I (2000)	Phase II (20	001) Phase III (2002)	TOTAL
I. Start-up stewardship,				
environmental reviews	81,750			81,750
2. Demonstration project				
implementation	32,700			32,700
3. Three Project Area				
physical models	29,430	9,810	9,810	49,050
4. Geological and hydrological				
studies, permits	10,900	10,900	10,900	32,700
5. Animal and plant				
studies	10,900	10,900	009,01	32,700
6. Scientific monitoring	10,900	10,900	10,900	32,700
7. Publication, outreach	10,900	10,900	10,900	32,7 00
8. Three-year field				
implementation	200,000	350,000	185,750	735,750
9. Legal agreements,				
mediation with landowners	5.450	_5.450	_5.450	16.350
	392,930	408,860	244,610	1.046,400

IX. Cost Sharing

The six-mile Wildcat Canyon ridge along the Project Area is a complex of private and public ownership. Hundreds of private parcels and homes border upon public land, which is the responsibility of several agencies, especially the East Bay Regional Park District. Money and work have always been invested in this area to deal with fire safety, slides, weed control, and to serve other values. It is the objective of this LOCAL WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP project to build on this base and to bring a more holistic restoration approach to managing an important watershed.

We assume that previous levels of local expenditure will continue, and taken together approximately equal what is now requested of CALFED. Further, it is a prime objective of this project to mobilize hundreds of volunteers to work on the project or to help pay for its continuation into the future. Thus, local effort is expected to increase with the stimulus of CALFED funding. Many of the ideas and objectives of this project have already been published in a local newsletter, News from the Buffer Zone, edited by William McClung and published by the Center for Environmental Structure (CES) in Berkeley. The WILDCAT CANYON WESTERN SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT will be extensively covered in that publication, which will be used in part to publicize the goals, needs, and accomplishments of the project. CES is also beginning work on a book with the tentative title of The Civic Ecology of Buffer Zone Restoration, which is intended to articulate the community-based principles of ecological restoration of which this project is likely to be the first large example in the East Bay Hills.

Developing a long-term way to sustain work on this watershed, based on strong local involvement and cost sharing, is a prime objective of this three-year project.



Berkeley Professor Emeritus Robert Stebbins and retired Berkeley Fire Captain Rex. Dittderich discussing the goods and bads of vegetation in Wildeat Canyon, September 1996.

X. Applicant Qualifications

The City of El Cerrito, the Lead Agency, is the central political entity immediately west of the Project Area and also provides fire protection for Kensington. Its boundaries interpenetrate those of Kensington, Richmond, East Richmond Heights, Contra Costa County, and the East Bay Regional Park District. El Cerrito's Community Development and Fire Departments are actively interested in managing this project, partnering with EBRPD and other neighboring jurisdictions on managed burns, providing leadership with community work crews, and will continuously inspect and monitor the area, including hundreds of private parcels bordering the Project Area.

Shelterbelt Builders Inc, the Project Manager, is a local land management firm dedicated to developing, implementing, and monitoring projects of this kind. Shelterbelt has in the last three years engaged in extensive land management combining fuel/invasive exotic reduction with native plant restoration in the East Bay Hills. Since 1997, Shelterbelt has worked on land owned by the Vicente Canyon I lillside Foundation, the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, the East Bay Regional Park District (Tina Baumgartner Restoration Site and as volunteers at the CNPS Native Here Nursery in Tilden Park), the University of California (Panoramic Hill Project), the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (a 50-acre broom removal project), and various private landowners. Shelterbelt has worked extensively with volunteers and with youth-at-risk and welfare-to-work programs.

Shelterbelt's evolving vision of how wildfire safety, weed control, and restoration can be combined has been published in *News from the Buffer Zone*, especially "Exotic Plants Suggested for Reduction or Elimination in the Buffer Zone," (Booker, 9/97), "Beneficial Native Plants in our Buffer Zones," (Booker, 9/97), "Toward a Civic Ecology of Buffer Zone Restoration," (McClung et al, 4/98), and "Living Structure in our Buffer Zones," (McClung, 1/99).

Three principals of Shelterbelt will share overall management responsibility for the WILDCAT CANYON WESTERN SLOPE RESTORATION PROJECT: William J. McClung, editor and publisher of News from the Buffer Zone and member of the California Native Plant Society; 1994-96 Commissioner, Berkeley Fire Assessment District; 30-year resident in the Berkeley Hills. Noah D. Booker, UC Santa Cruz graduate, Certified Arborist, native plant writer for News from the Buffer Zone; landscape and horticulture consultant; Chair East Bay CNPS Native Plant Restoration Team; board member East Bay Chapter CNPS. Mark A. Heath, UC Santa Cruz graduate with previous experience in environmental education and water quality monitoring; has implemented successful fisheries and riparian monitoring and restoration projects in the Eel and Salmon (ID) river drainages. Each of these three officers of Shelterbelt will serve as one of the ten Area Stewards on the project. A fourth Shelterbelt employee, Laura Goodhue, also a recent UC Santa Cruz graduate with a passion for California native plants, will have primary responsibility for seed collection and propagation activities in the project.

East Bay Regional Parks District, which owns approximately 80 percent of the land in the Project Area, and joins in the making of this application, is the indispensible partner in the project and by far the greatest source of knowledge, technical studies, and experience in Wildcat Canyon. This project is largely conceived as an extension, refinement and implementation of approved Park District policies and the engagement of its diversely talented staff in the project, to the maximum extent feasible, is a goal of the project.

XI. Bibliography

Important documents in preparing this application and project, include:

Wildcat Canyon/Tilden Regional Parks: Resource Analysis, EBRPD, 1975/1984.

Wildrat Canyon Regional Park: Final Land Use/Development Plan & Environmental Impact Report, EBRPD, 1985.

El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area Fire Hazard Reduction Plan: Initial Study/Negative Declaration, 1994

Fire Hazard Mitigation Program & Fuel Management Plan for the East Bay Hills, Vegetation Management Consortium, 1995. Especially, Technical Appendices, "Treatment Prescription Descriptions by Vegetation Types."

<u>Program Environmental Impact Report for Vegetation Management Program</u>, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Draft September 1998.

Various issues of News from the Buffer Zone: An Occasional Publication Dedicated to Creating a Beautiful, Biologically Rich, and Wildfire-safe East Bay Hills, Center for Environmental Structure, 1996-99. Especially "Beneficial Native Plants in our Buffer Zones," Booker, 1997, and "Learning to Love and Create Native Grasslands," Booker, 1999.

For Section IV. Ecological/Biological Benefits

Alexander, Peter. 1999. Personal Communication, East Bay Regional Park District.

Collins, Laurel. 1999. Personal Communication, San Francisco Estuary Institute.

Daniels, R.B. and Gilliam, J.W. 1996. <u>Sediment and Chemical Load Reduction by Grass and Riparian Filters.</u> Soil Sci. Soc. Am. J. 60:246-251.

East Bay Regional Park District. 1999. <u>East Bay Hills 1850 Native Vegetation-Concept Created by Removing Exotics and Brushlands</u>.

Lake, Dianne. 1999. <u>Unusual and Significant Plants of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.</u> 5th ed. California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter.

Maps

Jerry Kent, East Bay Regional Park District, has provided a set of large-scale vegetation and geotechnical maps of the entire Project Area, prepared in 1985.

JEAN B. SIRI 1015 Leneve Pl El Cerrito, CA 94530

April 12, 1999

Gary Fokorny El Cerrito City Manager 10890 San Pablo Avenue El Cerrito, CA 94530-2751

Dear Gary,

For 18 years Will and I have worked to make the western slope of Wildcat Canyon fire safe, but much remains to be done.

Will served on the Blue Ribbon Urban Interface Fire Prevention Committee, 1982. I am the elected representative on the EBRPD Board, with El Cerrito and Kensington as part of my Ward.

Therefore, this proposal is very much in theinterest of my constituents. We are indeed very pleased with the El Cerrito - Shelterbelt Builders Inc. proposal to Calfed. It seems to satisfy all the questions and problems of people in opposation to the fuel break. Slope restoration offers a real opportunity for community cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jean and Will Siri

ROART OF DIRECTORS
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Pat O'Brigh County Manager

REGIONAL PARK BISTRIOT

April 12, 1999

Mr. Gary Pokorny, City Manager City of El Cerrito 10890 San Pablo Avenue El Cerrito, CA 94530

Re: Wildcat Canyon Western Slope Restoration Project

Dear Mr. Pokomy:

I am writing to indicate the East Bay Regional Park District's support for the City's grant application to CALFED for approximately \$1.2 million for a 3 year Local Watershed Restoration Project along the eastern borders of Kensington, El Cerrito, East Richmond Heights, and Richmond.

The District's Board of Directors endorsed the project in concept on April 6, 1999, subject to further project development in conformance with District policies and appropriate CEQA reviews. Should CALFED funding become available to the City for this project, the District will welcome exploring cooperative options for the future enhancement of the Wildcat Canyon western slope.

The District appreciates the opportunity to support the City's grant application for this restoration project.

Pat O'Brien General Manager

2950 Peraita Oaks Court P.O. Box 5581 Cakfand, CA 94605-0381

www.obperks.org 100: 810 633-0480 Tel: 610 636-0735 Tel: 510 569-4319

APR-13-1999 TUE 10:44 AN

State of California The Resources Agency Department of Water Resources

(Notarial Seal)

Agreement No	
Exhibit	

NONCOLLUSION AFFIDAVIT TO BE EXECUTED BY BIDDER AND SUBMITTED WITH BID FOR PUBLIC WORKS

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GARY F. POKOKNI	, being first duly sworn, deposes and
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says that he or she is <u>Ci</u>	(position title)
	(the bidder)
has not directly or indirectly indusham bid, and has not directly or in with any bidder or anyone else to publidding; that the bidder has not agreement, communication, or cobidder or any other bidder, or to furice, or of that of any other bidd body awarding the contract of an statements contained in the bid directly or indirectly, submitted h contents thereof, or divulged information of pay, any fee to any corporation bid depository, or to any memb sham bid.	nuine and not collusive or sham; that the bidder aced or solicited any other bidder to put in a false indirectly colluded, conspired, connived, or agreed out in a sham bid, or that anyone shall refrain from in any manner, directly or indirectly, sought by inference with anyone to fix the bid price of the fix any overhead, profit, or cost element of the bid ler, or to secure any advantage against the public ayone interested in the proposed contract; that all are true; and, further, that the bidder has not, is or her bid price or any breakdown thereof, or the remation or data relative thereto, or paid, and will a partnership, company, association, organization, her or agent thereof to effectuate a collusive or
DATED: Capil 14, 1999	By (person signing for hidder)
BETH BARTKE Comm. # 1133400 NOTARY PUBLIC CALIFORNIA County of Contra Costa My Comm. Expires April 13, 2001	Subscribed and sworn to before me on April 14, 1999 Beth Bartke
	(Notary Public)

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